

Stamp Collecting Mike to Gary



Stratford Hall was depicted on a 4¢ United States postage stamp of the 1936-37 Army-Navy issue. The stamp shows General Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson, with Stratford Hall in the center. From December 1936 to May 1937, the United States Post Office issued a series of ten commemorative postage stamps depicting war heroes from the Army and Navy. The gray 4¢ Army stamp features portraits of Confederate Generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, with a view of Stratford Hall, Lee's ancestral home.

This stamp represents one of the few instances in which military leaders who bore arms against the United States have been featured on a U.S. postage stamp.

Ken: I have heard you speak previously at Book Club gatherings about your stamp collecting. Was this primarily commemorative stamps from the earlier days of the United States of America?

I am also involved in writing Family History, which should include my own story of stamp collecting. I would appreciate getting a summary of yours, to include as appropriate.

For how much of your misspent youth were you a stamp collector? Was your twin brother also a collector, so you had competing, perhaps highly duplicate collections? When did you find out it was a vocation, not necessarily an investment? I would love to hear about when you had a true love of the hobby, and how it was nurtured.

Thanks,
- The Auteur

[note: Ken Gillen's write-up on Stamp Collecting is saved in this folder as a .docx file. I have images of each of the 7 stamps that Gary put on his colorful Christmas card mailing, starting with 8c Tanner. I would like to have a one-sentence description of each, to go with the image.]

Gary: I am in possession of a colorful envelope sent from Rocklin, CA which sports commemorative stamps from the earlier days of the United States of America.

I am also involved in writing Family History.

Were you a stamp collector as part of your misspent youth? I take it you found out it was a vocation, not necessarily an investment. But I would love to hear about when you had a true love of the hobby, and how it was nurtured.

Thanks,
- The Auteur

Hi, Mike,

I was a stamp collector as a youth. My father enjoyed stamps and encouraged me to collect them. I would only collect cancelled stamps because I was very frugal and they were the most affordable.

My father collected stamps his whole life. Our bubble was broken when the Post Office decided to replace the traditional stamps which were licked with adhesive stamps. The hobby suddenly became passé. Adhesive stamps cannot be removed from their backing easily so there is no great market in cancelled adhesive stamps.

Plate blocks were the four stamps in the corner with the serial number of the sheet. The Post Office started putting the serial number on several segments of the sheet so the plate block became more than four stamps.

Some collectors made small fortunes by acquiring a sheet of misprints from the Post Office. Certain socialist minded congressmen decreed that the post office should print additional misprints when that occurred so that no collector could profit from the errors of the government.

In general Americans have lost interest in collecting antiques, coins, stamps or anything from previous generations. Stamps just seemed to be more impacted than other collectibles.

I inherited my father's mint postage stamps. The market is very weak for them so I decided to use them to mail cards to friends. I try to provide an assortment of stamps on each card to make them more interesting. It is sad that I often use several stamps on a card. In their time, each stamp would have paid the postage for that card. That reflects almost an order of magnitude loss of the purchasing power of the dollar in our lifetime. The congress continues to fund large budget deficits to fund

pork for their district and encourage voters to reelect them to another extravagant term of office.

So that is my saga for stamp collecting. I still have many stamp products to sell of ebay (first day covers, special stamps, etc.)

Gary

Thank you, Gary -

Excellent summary, and the sad state of affairs of today. Many years ago (maybe 15?) I was in one of the (last) stamp dealer offices in ABQ, and heard him on the phone. The gist of the conversation: "Mint collection? I'll give you 60% of the face value." [pause] "Yes, well, that's a lot of letters you'd have to mail!"

I will write up my stamp collecting days in the book. Unfortunately, I have far from total recall ... but my memory says I rode the bus to downtown Houston, went up an elevator to a small office upstairs (in the Rusk Bldg? On Rusk Ave?) and the nice elderly gentleman on the other side of the desk would show me what he had for sale, and recommend this over that. So today I have my collection - what will tomorrow bring? I'll probably be mailing some letters back to you!

thanks,

- Mike

Hi, Mike,

It is sad that our mint stamps have little value and can only be used up with great effort. I have been using up mint stamps since 2015. It takes me about five or ten minutes to stamp an envelope. I do not use old stamps to mail critical letters to the IRS and the CA tax authority for fear that some collector might grab the envelope. People seem to enjoy seeing the old stamps.

At a recent vintage book fair a stamp dealer said that people want the whole envelope now, not just the stamps., so collectors goals do change.

I have used up a lot of stamps and as I get to smaller denominations, I seem to use more. There is a limit to how many stamps I can fit on an envelope, so I used to use a modern 22 cent to go with the vintage stamps. Then I switched to using two 13 cent stamps from the state flag series.

I have not visited many stamp shops over the years. There was a street of stamp dealers in NYC near my father's office on Broadway. He loved to go there and browse and buy. He should have invested in stocks instead, but he believed that you had to trade stocks to make money. He must have been brain-washed by a broker earlier in his life. Buy and hold is usually the best strategy unless you are clairvoyant.

So my father's legacy to me was a stamp collection which my grandchildren have no interest in.

If I start selling first day covers, I will use vintage stamps to pay for the postage.

We will look forward to receiving your vintage stamps on your letters.

You may find ways to market your mint stamps that are profitable to you. I decided that my time was worth more than I could recover from ebay.

Gary